**Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.**

Henderson, R.W. and R. Powell. 2002. *Epicrates gracilis*.

## *Epicrates gracilis* (Fischer)

*Chilabothrus gracilis* Fischer 1888:35, pl. 3, fig. 8. Type locality, "Cap Hayti" (= Cap Haïtien), Département du Nord, Haiti. Syntypes, Zoologisches Museum, Hamburg (HZM), both adults, sex unknown, date of collection and collector unknown (now destroyed).

*Epicrates gracilis*: Boulenger 1893:98. First use of present combination.

• **CONTENT.** Two subspecies are currently recognized: *Epicrates gracilis gracilis* and *E. g. hapalus*.

**FIGURE 1.** *Epicrates gracilis* from Bávaro, Provincia La Altagracia, República Dominicana.

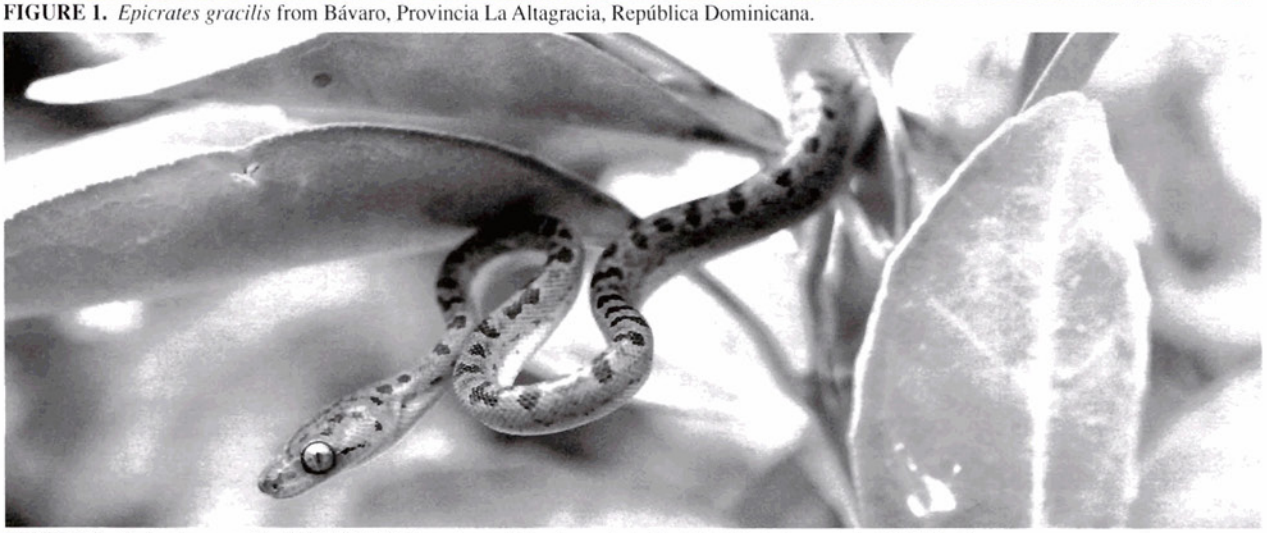


**FIGURE 2.** *Epicrates gracilis* (MPM 21174) from Levy, Département du Sud, Haiti (photograph by N.B. Ford).

• **DEFINITION.** *Epicrates gracilis* has a slender, elongated, laterally compressed body and a maximum SVL of 905 mm. Dorsal scales on the neck are in 27–42 rows, at midbody in 33–47 rows, and just anterior to the vent in 21–29 rows. Ventrals number 271–304 in males and 271–296 in females. Subcaudals number 91–111 in males and 90–102 in females; ventrals + subcaudals total 368–415 in males and 364–396 in females. Other features of scutellation are: supralabials 11–15 (usually 12–14, with usually 2 entering the eye), infralabials 11–16 (usually 12–14); circumorbital scales 9–14 (usually 10–11); loreals 1–2 (usually 1); head scale formula (Fig. 50 in Schwartz and Henderson 1985) usually 4–1–2.

The dorsal ground color is tan to brown with 62–100 subcircular to ovate, dark brown body blotches. Dark markings in a second, more lateral row are variable in size and shape (blotch-like, dots, spots, or diagonal and irregular dashes). Tail blotches number 21–35. The venter is yellow-tan to brown with scattered darker brown suffusions.

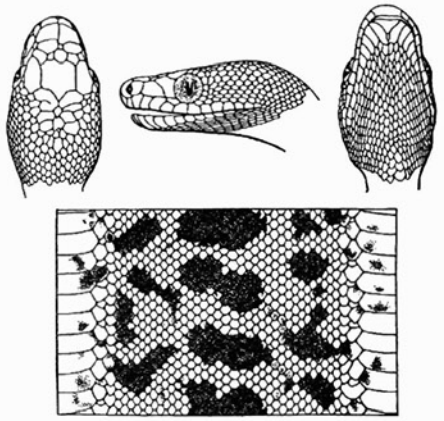


**FIGURE 3.** *Epicrates gracilis* (USNM 55025) from Rojo Cabo, Samaná, República Dominicana (from Cochran 1941).

• **DIAGNOSIS.** *Epicrates gracilis* can be distinguished from all other sympatric boids by the following combination of characters: 11–16 (usually 12–14) infralabials versus 15–22 (usually 18–20) in Hispaniolan *E. striatus*; SVL < 1.0 m versus maximum SVL > 1.8 m in Hispaniolan *E. striatus*; 271 or more ventrals versus 261 or fewer in *E. fordii*; and 90 or more subcaudals versus 89 or fewer in *E. fordii*.

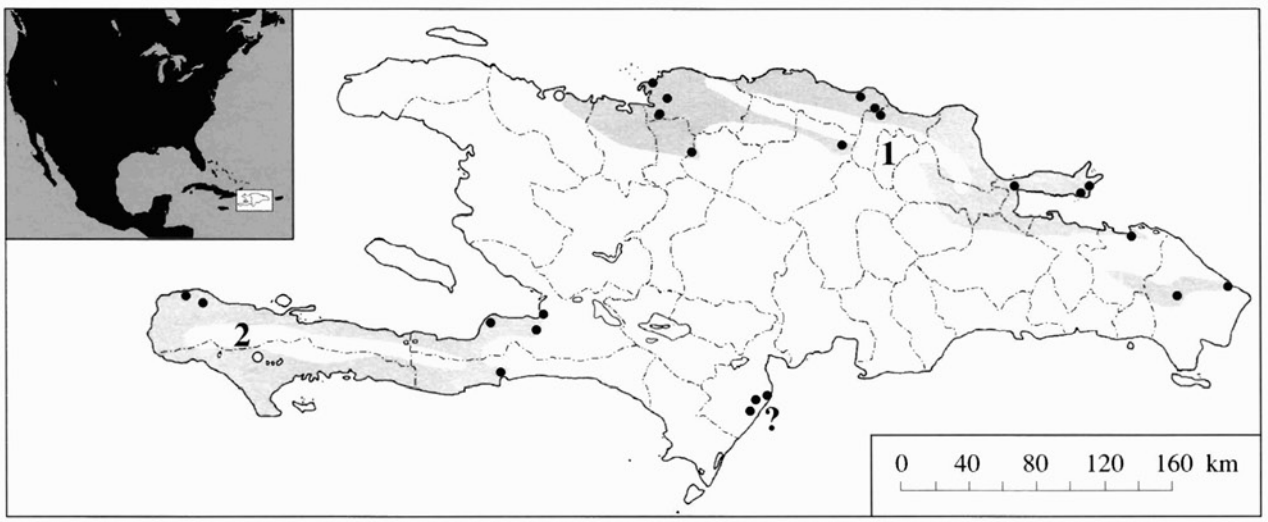
• **DESCRIPTIONS.** In addition to the original descriptions of specific and subspecific taxa and brief descriptions in many of the notes and lists cited below, detailed descriptions are in Mertens (1939), Cochran (1941), Schwartz and Henderson (1991), and Tolson and Henderson (1993).

• **ILLUSTRATIONS.** Color photographs are in Tolson and Henderson (1993), Powell et al. (1996), and Walls (1998). A black and white photo is in Henderson and Schwartz (1984). Colored drawings illustrating the head and midbody are in Walls (1998). Line drawings are in Fischer (1888, top of head and lateral view at midbody) and Cochran (1941, top and side of the head and chin). A color photograph of habitat is in Tolson and Henderson (1993).

• **DISTRIBUTION.** *Epicrates gracilis* occurs on Hispaniola, where it is known from scattered localities on Haiti's Tiburon Peninsula, the north Haitian coast in the vicinity of the type locality, and scattered localities in northern, eastern (including the Samana Peninsula), and southwestern (Barahona Peninsula) portions of the República Dominicana. The distribution has been illustrated in Sheplan and Schwartz (1974), Schwartz and Henderson (1991), Tolson and Henderson (1993), and Walls (1998).

• **FOSSIL RECORD.** None.

• **PERTINENT LITERATURE.** Relevant references are listed by topic: **biogeography** (Kluge 1988, Tolson 1987), **body size and form** (Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996, Greene 1997), **captive husbandry** (Tolson 1994, Walls 1998), **constricting behavior** (Greene and Burghardt 1978), **distribution** (Engelmann and Obst 1981, Powell et al. 1999), **diet** (Henderson et al. 1987, Henderson and Crother 1989), **foraging heights** (Lillywhite and Henderson 1993), **habitat** (SEA/DVS 1990, Tolson and Henderson 1993), **lung anatomy** (Wallach 1998), **natural history** (Henderson 2002, Tolson and Henderson 1993), **phylogeny** (Kluge 1988, Kluge 1989, Kluge 1991, Tolson 1987, Tolson and Henderson 1993), **reproductive biology** (Murphy et al. 1978, Tolson 1992, Tolson and Henderson 1993), **systematics** (Crother 1999, Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996, Sheplan and Schwartz 1974), **taxonomic history** (McDiarmid et al. 1999, Powell et al. 1999).




**MAP.** Distribution of *Epicrates gracilis*. Circles denote type localities, dots indicate other known records, and the question mark indicated records from the east coast of the Península de Barahona that "may represent intergrades between the 2 subspecies" (Schwartz and Henderson 1991).

The species (under various names listed in the synonymy) also is included in **notes, checklists, guides, and keys** by Amaral (1929 [1930]), Barbour (1914; 1930; 1935; 1937), Boulenger (1893), Cochran (1924, 1941), Frank and Ramus (1995), Henderson and Schwartz (1984), Henderson et al. (1984), MacLean et al. (1977), Mertens (1939), Powell et al. (1996, 1999), Schwartz and Henderson (1985, 1988, 1991), Schwartz and Thomas (1975), Stimson (1969), Stull (1935), and Zenneck (1898).

• **REMARKS.** Specimens from the east coast of the Barahona Peninsula may represent intergrades between the two subspecies (Schwartz and Henderson 1991).

• **ETYMOLOGY.** The specific name *gracilis* is from the Latin, meaning slender or thin, no doubt in reference to the habitus of this snake, perhaps the most slender of the boids. The name *hapalus* is from the Greek for "gentle, delicate," in reference to the nature of these snakes (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974).

### 1. *Epicrates gracilis gracilis* (Fischer)

*Chilabothrus gracilis* Fischer 1888:35, pl. 3, fig. 8. See species synonymy.
*Epicrates gracilis*: Boulenger 1893:98. See species synonymy.
*Epicrates gracilis gracilis*: Stull 1935:397.

• **DIAGNOSIS.** This subspecies can be distinguished from *E. g. hapalus* on the basis of number of ventral scales: 271–286 ($\bar{x}$ = 278.6) in male *E. g. gracilis* and 278–304 ($\bar{x}$ = 290.6) in male *E. g. hapalus*, 271–286 ($\bar{x}$ = 278.7) in female *E. g. gracilis* and 279–296 ($\bar{x}$ = 286.8) in female *E. g. hapalus*; and ventrals + subcaudals: 368–377 ($\bar{x}$ = 362.6) in male *E. g. gracilis* and 376–415 ($\bar{x}$ = 395.6) in male *E. g. hapalus*, 364–383 ($\bar{x}$ = 375.3) in female *E. g. gracilis* and 373–396 ($\bar{x}$ = 383.3) in female *E. g. hapalus*.

### 2. *Epicrates gracilis hapalus* Sheplan and Schwartz

*Epicrates gracilis hapalus* Sheplan and Schwartz 1974:117. Type locality, "Camp Perrin, Département du Sud, Haiti." Holotype, Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) 125602 (original number ASFS X3250), an adult male, collected 28 July 1962 by native collectors (not examined by authors).

• **DIAGNOSIS.** See "Diagnosis" for *Epicrates g. gracilis*.

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